

150th Anniversary

Minnesota Security Hospital

Some patients who had earned the freedom to roam the grounds unescorted built private shacks, which they used in their leisure time, on hillsides and in ravines surrounding the hospital. A number of these sanctuaries were highly designed and had elaborate features and landscaping, such as stone retaining walls and walkways, even their own ponds.



A patient relaxes at his get-away.
Note the intricate stonework and extensive stairway to the bluff above.



Most liberty shacks were built from discarded and scavenged materials, everything from wooden peach crates and old gallon cans to pieces of demolished buildings. "When the old superintendent's house was torn down, the patients had a field day," one longtime employee reported. "The patients kept carting things away."



Liberty shacks dotted the landscape around all of Minnesota's state hospitals. By most estimates, there were more than 100 of them statewide during the 1950s.



Dubbed "Roy's Shack" after the patient who built it, this is the last remaining liberty shack on the St. Peter campus. The owner used it until 1977.